

Honors Students Present at Regional Academic Conference

Ysel Alcala wears several different hats. She's a wife, a mother of three young children and an Army veteran, but still, Alcala says, something was missing from her life.

"I didn't really know what that was until I went back to school," said the Lee College Honors Program student. "I was able to find a new outlook and regain that self-rewarding feel that I lost over the years."

Alcala credits her professors, Drs. Georgeann Ward and Javier Ramirez, for helping her feel challenged and comfortable in her own skin.

"The Honors program has helped build my confidence with not only my writing, but it also helped me regain an identity that I suppressed for a while," shared Alcala, who is in her second year at Lee.

This semester, Alcala put her confidence in action at the [2022 Gulf Coast Intercollegiate Consortium \(GCIC\) Conference](#). She was among 11 Honors Program students chosen to present their work at the prestigious event in front of dozens of educators and peers at Lone Star College-Kingwood. Each student presented truncated versions of seminar papers they wrote over the spring and summer semesters in Ward and Ramirez's Human Condition course and Joe Ganakos's Argumentation and Debate course. Topics ran the gamut – from pop culture to politics to existentialism. After each presentation, students answered questions on the fly about their findings.

"It's probably the most exciting point for the students because they really must be on their toes," explained Ward, Honors Program coordinator. "They have to make sure they can defend any idea that's in the paper."

The GCIC was the second conference for IMPACT Early College High School senior Sydney Joy Dado. But this time around, the dual credit student felt more confident and prepared.

"At first, I wasn't sure I was good at speaking, but this environment is very supportive, especially with your peers and professors. That helped me develop more confidence in my speaking skills and my presence," Dado shared.

Her presentation, "The Flaws of Regret in 'The Midnight Library'," talked about how regret can make people self-destructive rather than productive.

"It's reassuring to know my professors have my back, and they encourage me to think bigger than what we are told – which makes me want to aim for what they expect of me and higher," added Dado, who learned through this process that she enjoys speaking in front of people.

For Alcala, her experience in the Honors Program helped her find her voice. Her presentation, "Influenced by Plastic: Barbie," shined a light on the negative influence the popular doll has on girls, which can lead to depression, anorexia and body dysmorphia.

"I have a daughter. Whenever I spoke about Barbie's image, I wanted people to know what her image represents," Alcala explained. "We see Barbie as this groundbreaking doll for girls who expresses herself through all these different types of jobs. But she still holds this image of this unattainable beauty. I need other parents to know that Barbie is healthy, but it also depends on the environment in which you have her."

Ward says the mission of the Honors Program is to give students many opportunities through service, leadership, academics and cultural experiences and that an experience like the GCIC adds depth to who they are as a student and individual.

Presentations by other Honors Program students include:

- Adriana Curiel: "Sexist Ideals and Generational Trauma in 'Turning Red'"
- Rebecca Currie and Diego Moreno: "The Responsibility of Education Post Dobbs v. Jackson"
- Debany Gomez Sanchez: "How 'Twilight' Romanticizes Rape Culture"
- Jorge "Kennay" Granados: "The Dangers of Masculinity in 'Goat'"
- Priscilla Guerra: "It's Important to Feel Wanted: The Impact of Dobbs on Future Crimes"
- Marissa Ledbetter: "The Portrayal of a Rake turned Bachelor in 'Bridgerton'"
- Xitlaly Ruiz: "The Fallout: Learning to Live Once More"
- Yaritza Serrano: "'Euphoria' and Toxic Masculinity"

[Learn more about the Honors Program](#) at Lee College.

Pictured above, from left: Dr. Javier Ramirez, Adriana Curiel, Debany Gomez, Sydney Joy Dado, Diego Moreno, Xitlaly Ruiz, Jorge "Kennay" Granados, Rebecca Currie, Yaritza Serrano, Ysel Alcalá, Priscilla Guerra, and Dr. Georgeann Ward attended the 2022 Gulf Coast Intercollegiate Consortium Conference at Lone Star College-Kingwood. Not pictured: Marissa Ledbetter